



News Release

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LAVA HOT SPRINGS AREA SITE
TOPS STATE LANDS WIND POWER POTENTIAL LIST

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A mountain ridgeline south of Lava Hot Springs in Bannock County appears to have the top wind power potential of all state-owned lands in Idaho, Energy Division wind power specialists said today.

Officials estimate the 10-15 mile long ridgeline in the Portneuf Mountain Range about five miles south of Lava Hot Springs could support a wind farm capable to producing up to 150 Megawatts of electrical power. A wind farm that size could potentially involve 100 or more wind rotor towers.

A 20-square-mile area in Owyhee County about 8 miles northwest of Silver City and a huge 150-square-mile block of state-owned land on ridgelines east of Priest Lake in Bonner and Boundary Counties in northern Idaho round out the top three potential wind power development sites.

“The Lava Hot Springs site appears to have excellent potential for wind power development. There is even a location on the ridge named ‘Windy Pass’ which gives you some idea of the available winds in the area,” said Gerald Fleischman, one of the state wind specialists involved in evaluating the sites. Fleischman and a wind power specialist from the Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory made an evaluation visit to the site in late August.

State wind power specialists selected the top three sites from a list of a dozen sites around the state that showed promise for wind power development following visits to the areas.

The Lava Hot Springs site features a long ridgeline situated perpendicular to the prevailing winds in the area. The site is also reasonably close to both existing electrical transmission lines and roads in the area. U.S. government wind resource maps show the area to have Class 6 winds, meaning winds averaging 17-18 miles per hour.

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The Priest Lake area had originally been eliminated from consideration due to environmental concerns. However, wind specialists were prompted to add the site back into the top three listing after a visit to the area. They say the vast 150-square mile area containing a ridgeline perpendicular to excellent prevailing winds, convinced them that the site had such good wind power development potential that it should at least be considered.

Once the wind data measurement phase is completed, Idaho Energy Division wind specialists will give the Idaho Department of Lands a comprehensive report on the sites. State land managers then can potentially use the information to help the state market the sites to commercial wind energy developers as possible wind power development sites. Wind power developers typically pay \$2,000 - \$4,000 per year per turbine to lease ground on which the wind turbines are situated.

Idaho Energy Division wind specialists now will move to install wind-measuring devices, called anemometers, at the top sites. The anemometers are installed on towers where they continuously measure and record wind speeds. The wind speed data is a crucial element in determining whether or not a site has commercial development potential.

To develop the initial list of sites, Idaho Energy Division scientists used computer technology to overlay digital Idaho wind power resource maps with grids pinpointing areas state owned lands.

IDWR geographic information system specialists then added additional layers of data showing power transmission lines, roads and other important wind power development requirements. The result was a matrix that let scientists rank those areas of state-owned land with the highest potential for wind energy development. They then paid on-site visits to the top dozen areas.